ROUNDTABLE 1: TRANSCRIBING QUAL. INTERVIEWS

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BLUEURBAN
Towards Blue Urbanism for Sea Level Change Adaptation: Global Trajectories and Speculative Futuring in Island Southeast Asia

A German Science Foundation (DFG) funded SPP initiative “Regional Sea Level Change and Society” (Phase II)
Earliest forms... oral history, royal scribes, funerary rites/tombs, religious instruction...

“A transcript is basically the text version of an oral interview, written out word-for-word. Transcription is the process whereby a transcript is created. And within those two definitions, there is a whole world of complication.” (Eidinger 2019)

Why reflect on transcription?

Your ideas....

Ida – transcripts as administrative; standardized...
Accounting for the sheer diversity...

Muthi: Put all the information down, very detailed documentation, like pauses...Sensitive stories, e.g. domestic violence.
Providing context, including expressions, and gestures.

Iqbal: three different documents...transcriptions were verbatim (spoken contents about the interview). Narrative info in fieldnotes.

Ida: Putting down the context...
Ways of thinking about transcription

“Transcription as method...”

Lapadat and Linsay (1999)

- Rethinking the linearity of process (i.e. recording, transcribing, coding, analysis etc.);
- Move away from ‘standarisation’ to context and reflexivity;
- Transcription itself as theory-laden because it rests on epistemological assumptions;
- Act of transcription as language interaction – “Each researcher makes choices about whether to transcribe, what to transcribe, and how to represent the record in text....”
Ways of thinking - transcription

Transcription as theory

Elinor Ochs (1979)

http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/ochs/articles/ochs1979.pdf (open access)

- Transcription in child language acquisition (linguistic anthropology)
- Organisation of page; paralinguistic and non verbal communication cues; placement of verbal and non-verbal behaviour etc.
- Mechanical devices do not preclude observational decisions

…..“the transcriptions are the researchers’ data” and that “transcription is a theoretical process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions” (p. 44).
Transcription as interpretative constructions and representational process . . .

“Different transcripts are constructs of different worlds, each designed to fit our particular theoretical assumptions and to allow us to explore their implications. . .” – Mishler (1999)

Kvale (1996) – Transcription is always a ‘translation’
- Boundaries of recording; audio and/or visual; angles and framing;
- Data analysis as beginning from the time of transcription
- Transcription was an “impoverished basis for interpretation” (artificial constructs, oral discourse does not translate into text so unproblematically...).
Forms of transcription
Hybrid choices – no singular method

- Captures what is being said, with false starts, grammatical inconsistencies; repetitions; yet ambient sounds documented for context

- Cleaner feel as it removes ambient noises, fillers as “unnecessary” detail

- BEWARE: what is considered unnecessary...?)

Standard Verbatim Transcription

Interviewee: XXX
Interviewer: XXX
Date of Interview: mm.dd.yy
Location of Interview: XXX
List of Acronyms: FP=Frank Peterson, IN=Interviewer

[Begin Transcript 00:00:10]

IN: So what was going on in your life when you joined the Marines?

FP: Well when I joined the navy, actually that was in 1950 at the age of 18. Not much other than the fact that I wanted to get away from Topeka and see what the rest of world was really all about.

IN: Um-hm.

[00:00:26]
Hybrid choices – no singular method

- The most detailed
- Captures as much detail including ambient sounds (registered)
- Non-verbal communication including laughs, coughs, lengths of pauses/silences; fillers like you know...uhm...

True verbatim

[00:00:26]

And of course having uh... gone through the uh flight training I received my uh wings and commission uh in October of uh 1952. And the- one of the reasons I uh opted for the Marines, I knew there had never been a black pilot in the Marine Corps. So I wanted to uh see if I could achieve that goal, which I was able to do.

And then my first duty assignment would have been in Cherry Point, North Carolina. But I'd had enough of the South and decided I wanted to stay away from the South if I possibly could, so Headquarters Marine Corps, at my request, uh changed my orders to El Toro, El Toro, California.

But what I didn't realize is that I'd jumped from the frying pan into the fire because El Toro was the training base for replacement pilots in Korea. So I jumped from the frying pan into the Korean War via El Toro [laugh].

IN: I see [laugh].

[End Transcript 00:01:21]
Hybrid choices – no singular method

‘Cleaned’ verbatim

IN: Um-hm.

[00:00:26]

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IN: I see.

[End Transcript 00:01:21]
1. Documenting all **transcriptions via an inventory (if helpful)** – contains **metadata** like interviewers’ reference details, important content for later analysis (with exact audio time/location 05.67); incl. dates of transcription and transcribers’ name/s;

2. Play the recording and adjust the speed of sound (.e.g. .5x-6x) to allow for slower typing; use of space key for pausing;

3. Agreed upon abbreviations for common occurrences:
   - Words with sound/meaning unclear
   - Disruption in quality with ambient n

4. Use of colour tags if helpful

5. Basic info captured at the beginning Of each transcription (identities of Interviewees recorded at this point); - Data confidentiality

**File Keys**
- No dot = Needs to be transcribed and checked
- Red = Transcribing in progress
- Blue = Transcribing completed
- Yellow = Checking in progress
- Orange = Checking completed
- Pink = Checking by transcriber in progress
- Green = Transcription and checking complete
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Kind of data</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Year 1     | Writings exploring language, culture, identity, & teaching | Personal language inventory  
Privileges inventory  
Cultural autobiography poem  
Visual identity journey  
Essay placing self in sociopolitical context | Self-reflexive inquiry into language, culture, & identity; linguistic repertoire; ways to leverage resources for use in language teaching |
|            | Survey responses                    | Survey on language history  
Survey on language ideologies | Language history & ideologies                                          |
|            | Observations of undergraduate in-class practice | PowerPoint (Ppt) presentation on idioms (co-presented)  
Email messages & informal chats | Emerging interests in language & its teaching                             |
| Year 2     | Interview                           | Audio and transcribed interview  
Photos & student work samples  
Ppt slides and notes | Teaching context & experiences, how her own language experiences shaped ideas on instructional activities involving language |
| Year 3     | Instructional artifacts Preservice Ppt on classroom inquiry | Ppt slides, inquiry assignments (lit review, methods memos), executive summary, poster presentation | Language teaching & learning Inquiry into questions about student learning & challenges |
|            | Inservice Ppt on classroom inquiry | Classroom artifacts (photos of posters, student work samples directly related to what is observed) | Language teaching & learning |
|            | Observations of teaching (January and May) | Audio & fieldnotes of teaching  
Semi-structured interviews: 2 pre-observation, 2 post-observation; 1 focused on MA inquiry project | Language teaching & learning Inquiry into questions about student learning & challenges |
|            | Interviews (January & May)          | Participant-initiated emails | Ideas as she develops students' language & literacy; problem-solving; connections to resources, what is shaping pedagogical decisions |
|            | Email correspondences                |                                                                 | Reflections/connections between resources & practices                  |
Brief Guidelines – 2 (adapted from Peraza 2019)

1. Decisions to be made: tabular or white space document
   Line numbering if necessary?
   Use of indented lines

For e.g. 

0.25” for responses to the main question, 0.50” for each sub-question, and 0.75” for each response to the sub-question. See example below

I: What was your favourite subject in high school?

P: Well, I liked both math and history.

I: Can you tell me more about the subjects you liked?

P: Yes, math wasn’t easy for me, but I had a teacher that made it simple.

For group interviews, more linear…

- Documenting exactly what they say, even if grammatically incorrect (e.g. “cuz” instead of “because”)
- Add identifying information…. “I asked her _____ (cousin) to accompany me..”
Ethics, challenges, and hacks...
Transcripts as analytical product: The first step at data analysis starts at transcription stage!

For more
https://www.reed.edu/anthro/201/transcription.html

Transcription always a selective process….being aware of theoretical, political, ethical implications
Reflective Transcription

*Transcription phrase as one of the most important and creative parts of an interview process...*

No perfect and ‘final’ transcript only different and revised versions depending on the purpose and audience

Capturing insights during transcription process:

- As comments bubbles/separate column
- Further questions to explore about the topic/or follow-up questions for the same people;
- Other ‘splintering’ ideas for further study/exploration etc...

Rapti’s fieldnotes (2012)
Further discussion – automated trans.

- Accuracy and reliability?
- Distances you from stories and insights?
- What is gained and lost?

Otter – AI
E.g. [https://otter.ai/](https://otter.ai/)

*Automated Transcription for Qualitative Research webinar (Caitlin Hafferty)*

Further discussion
Thank you!